DIALOGUES

ON THE

RIGHTS of *BRITONS*, &c.

DIALOGUE THE FIRST.

[Price Two-pence; or, Three Shillings and Six-pence the Quarter of a Hundred.]

9.

DIALOGUES

ON THE

RIGHTS

OF

BRITONS,

BETWEEN

A FARMER,

A SAILOR,

AND

A MANUFACTURER.

DIALOGUE THE FIRST.

THE SECOND EDITION.

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MDCCXCII.

DIALOGUES, &c.

FARMER.—SAILOR.

Farmer.

WELL, Jack! I rejoice that you have made ſo ſucceſsful a voyage, and I am happy to inform you that the prize-money which you got with ſo much honor the laſt war, and which I prevailed on you to let me lay out for you in the funds, is almoſt doubled by the prodigious riſe of Stocks. But here comes an old friend of yours—

Enter MANUFACTURER.

Sai. And I am ſorry to ſee that old friend has a new face. Good God! what an alteration: How ſhy he looks: What cheer my lad?

Mayhap you have met with rough weather. Never mind, we can't always have a fair wind.

Man. (*ſurlily*). No, and I believe we ſhall have a ſtorm before a calm.

Far. Why, what is the matter now? No freſh misfortune, I hope.

Man. Only my curſed landlord has threatened to ſeize my goods again if I do not pay my rent in a week; and God knows I could as well carry the houſe on my ſhoulders. But all thoſe matters will be ſet to rights by-and-by, and landlords will find themſelves in the wrong box.

Far How is it that every thing of late ſeems to have gone croſs with you? Formerly you were in a thriving way, and full of mirth and gaiety; now you are moping and peeviſh, and always meeting with ſome misfortune or another. Whence comes this change? You have had no illneſs in your family to pull you back.

Man. Why, to tell you the truth, my time has lately been taken up a good deal out of my buſineſs and in a better way. And though I feel the inconvenience in family affairs, I am wiſer than ever I was in my life.

Far. More *fooliſh*, you ſhould have ſaid, ſince, by your neglect, you have brought your family into trouble. But pray tell me in what manner you have been employed.

Man. I

Man. I have been ſtudying MR. PAINE's "*Rights of Man*," and other Works of the like kind: and I have been attending Clubs which have been eſtabliſhed in our town for the purpoſe of obtaining thoſe Rights.

Sai. And who the devil has dared to fall foul of thoſe Rights in this Country? I'll be d—'d if any foreign force will venture to attack them while they are defended by ſuch a Navy and ſo many gallant Tars. And as to matters at home, I never heard before but that every man's Rights were protected by Law.

Far. And ſo they are, and ever will be while the Conſtitution remains in force and vigor; thank God there is not a ſingle right which man can enjoy, that is not enjoyed and ſecured, in the completeſt manner, in this Country. But if you (*to Manufacturer*) have been ſtudying MR. PAINE, I am not at all ſurprized that your mind is become reſtleſs, your hands idle, and your circumſtances embarraſſed. Theſe are the Rights which he endeavours to eſtabliſh among the laborious part of the Community: He ſeeks to infuſe the poiſon of diſcontent into their minds, in order to make them his tools to promote confuſion. He wiſhes to diſturb the State, to overturn the Government, to demoliſh the Conſtitution, and to throw the Kingdom into diſorder, that he may gain thoſe advantages in a ſcramble which

he knows can never be procured by his merits. But ſeeing that the country is flouriſhing, and its inhabitants free, loyal, and happy, he finds that there is no chance of ſucceeding in his diabolical ſchemes, unleſs he can render the people diſcontented and diſaffected. He therefore endeavours to blind their eyes to all thoſe glorious and ſolid advantages, which have hitherto made the name of an Engliſhman reſpected, and his condition envied all over the world.

Man. Then I find you have read his works, as well as myſelf.

Far. During my late confinement I read them at the requeſt of a friend; and I never ſaw ſo much malice, ſo much falſehood, or real ignorance in any work in my life. My age, obſervation, and experience, aided by a good education (for you know I was firſt intended for the church), enable me, I hope, to form a tolerable judgment on moſt ſubjects, and, I believe, you will not doubt that my intentions are honeſt; and I am glad of an opportunity to undeceive you, and to reſtore your former attachment to the Conſtitution of your Country.

Man. That will be a difficult matter, for MR. PAINE has convinced me that we have been hitherto without a Conſtitution in this Country.

Sai. The

Sai. The devil he has, and yet that's odd enough, for I have heard of the *Britiſh* Conſtitution, and as a d——d good one too, all over the world.

Far. Phoo, Phoo! PAINE knows well enough that we have a Conſtitution, which has long been the admiration of the world; and, though his taſte is too depraved to admire what is ſo excellent, it excites his envy and his malice: while he denies its exiſtence, his grand wiſh is to ſee it demoliſhed; and, in order to promote its deſtruction, he labours to prejudice againſt it every one who will liſten to him.

Man. But I wiſh to know where this famous Conſtitution is to be found. I have ſeen a copy of the late Conſtitution of *France*, in a neat little book, containing the whole complete from beginning to end, and I dare ſay the next will be drawn out and publiſhed in like manner: but I have never had a copy of the *Engliſh* Conſtitution put into my hands, nor have I heard of any ſuch thing being kept at the *Tower* or any where elſe.

Sai. Nor I neither: but though I never ſaw a plan of it, I always underſtood that it was made of the beſt materials; that it was a long time in building; and that, being well put together, it has weathered many a hard gale.

Far. (*to Manufacturer*). You have hit upon an eſſential difference between the *Engliſh* Conſtitution and that which the *French* lately projected. The latter was indeed drawn up in great form upon paper, but it was only to be found upon paper; but the former is a ſolid and well-tried Syſtem, founded upon Experience, and long exiſting in actual practice. THEIRS was a muſhroom plan grown up in a night, and demoliſhed as quickly as it was framed—the produce of Fancy, and containing nothing more ſubſtantial than mere theory. OURS, like the Engliſh Oak, has arrived by ſlow degrees at maturity, and, like the Engliſh Oak too, is uſeful and durable, forming the ſtrength, while it ſecures the laſting happineſs of the Nation.

Sai. You could not have explained it better to my mind. Engliſh Oak is, as you ſay, ſlow in growth, but then it excels all other timber. That of America grows much quicker, but the ſhips built of it go ſooner to decay. There's nothing like Engliſh heart of Oak, and that our enemies well know.

Man. I cannot ſay I am yet ſatisfied. The late *French* Conſtitution, it is true, had bad luck, and laſted but a ſhort time, but yet in my little book I can ſee what it was. I can * "*produce it in a viſible form, and quote it article*

* Rights of Man.

"*by*

"*by article.*" Now can you in like manner produce the Engliſh Conſtitution. Where is *that* to be found?

Far. I admire your perſeverance about trifles. Nothing ſeems likely to ſatisfy you but a ſchedule or inventory of the Conſtitution, as if it were to be put up to auction: but it is our advantage that there is no occaſion to publiſh a code or plan in order to make it known; for, thank God, it is ſo well aſcertained, and ſo univerſally underſtood, as to render ſuch a meaſure quite unneceſſary. The French indeed wanted a code to deſcribe what had never before exiſted in point of fact; but their paper Conſtitution fell to pieces before they could well get it into their heads; while ours is deeply engraven on the hearts of Engliſhmen.

Man. Then you allow that there is no code to which we may refer for the Articles of the Britiſh Conſtitution.

Far. Indeed I do not. The Conſtitution of this country is to be found blended and incorporated with that venerable ſyſtem of written and unwritten laws which is juſtly the adoration of Engliſhmen: derived from the ſame origin, and having advanced together to maturity, they act upon, explain, and ſupport each other; their connection and mutual dependance are ſuch that they muſt ſtand or fall

together; and the enemies of one are the enemies of both. It is therefore among the ſacred regiſters of our private rights (the moſt proper place ſurely) that the principles and ſecurities of our public rights are to be found. Many of thoſe principles have ſtruck their roots deep among the original foundations of the common law; while in the ſtatute-book the various ſecurities and privileges obtained by the people at different times are faithfully recorded—There we find the great Charter of our Liberties, commonly called *Magna Charta*, obtained ſo long ago as the reign of King *John*, and confirmed by many ſubſequent ſtatutes.—There alſo we find the Petition of Right, being a Parliamentary ratification, in the reign of Charles the Iſt, of the rights of the people—There alſo we find the immortal *Habeas Corpus* Act, the laſt, the firm, and immoveable barrier of perſonal liberty—Afterwards, by the Bill of Rights, and laſtly by the Act of Settlement, made in the beginning of the preſent Reign, we find the ſucceſſion to the Crown and the functions of Government and limited and guarded in ſuch a manner as to prevent the poſſibility of encroachment, and to ſecure the laſting felicity and freedom of the People.

Sai. Now ſink me if I think any ſhip could have kept her log-book better. This is what I call a fine courſe, a good reckoning, and a proſperous voyage.

Man.

Man. And ſo we muſt pore over old muſty Acts of Parliament in order to diſcover this famous Conſtitution.

Far. I do not know what you call old muſty Acts of Parliament; but I think it is a great advantage, and a ſolid ground for rejoicing, that our rights have been eſtabliſhed and enjoyed for ſuch a length of time. They are thereby rendered more reſpectable, as well as more ſecure; and accordingly the people hold their *Magna Charta* in a veneration proportioned to its antiquity.

Man. But I for one have very little inclination to ſtudy, and ſtill leſs ability to purchaſe, the voluminous collections of the Statutes.

Far. It is not at all neceſſary that you ſhould; for the Hiſtory of the Country contains an adequate code of its Conſtitution, and diſplays to the comprehenſion of every one the manner in which that Conſtitution grew, the circumſtances under which the ſeveral parts of it were formed, and the principles upon which it was founded. In peruſing ſuch Hiſtory we ſhall ſee that the people have, from time to time, inſiſted upon and obtained ſuch civil advantages as Experience, the mother of True Wiſdom, pointed out to be neceſſary to their ſecure enjoyment of ſocial liberty. They did not act upon mere opinion, which differs ſo much

much in different perſons, and therefore affords but a very weak foundation to build upon; they improved thoſe opportunities which events threw in their way, of reſiſting and of vanquiſhing the abuſes which they had actually endured, and of providing effectual means againſt the repetition thereof. Hence the remedy was always adequate to the evil — one ſource of oppreſſion was cut off after another — advantages were ſecured as they were obtained — and at length the Conſtitution, being founded upon experience, and matured by time, arrived gradually at the perfection in which we now behold it, and became calculated both for utility and duration, every part being fitted for the purpoſe it was deſtined to anſwer, and the whole forming a well-connected and well-proportioned Syſtem.

Man. It ſeems, however, that the *French* did at once what the *Engliſh* were ages about.

Far. You ſhould rather ſay the *French* pretended to do at once what the *Engliſh* were ſo long in performing; for the former have only verified the old ſaying, that what is haſtily done is ill done. Great changes can only be made to advantage by very ſlow degrees. The late *French* Conſtitution was only a matter of experiment, and it was ſoon found to be impracticable, and ſpeedily vaniſhed into air. —"Like the baſeleſs fabric of a viſion, it has "not left a wreck behind." *Ours* is the reſult

ſult of experience, and after a lapſe of ages ſtands as firm as a rock. The Makers of Conſtitutions may hence derive a very uſeful leſſon, and learn the difference between Theory and Practice. If all the Philoſophers in the world were to aſſemble in order at once to frame a Conſtitution for a country, however beautiful and alluring their plan might be in appearance, there is very little chance that it would ſuit the manners, the habits, and the national character of the people, or that it would be practicable when it ſhould come to be tried. But the *French*, deſpiſing even the advantage of calm and orderly diſcuſſion, began with removing all thoſe powers and authorities which, however in ſome inſtances abuſed, were the only ſecurity for order, and attempted the great work of forming a Conſtitution in the midſt of Tumult, Riot, and Confuſion,—when calm Reaſon was obliged to give way to Paſſion and to Outrage,—when popular Commotion, artfully fomented, and diſplayed in Devaſtation and Maſſacre, kept the whole Kingdom in conſtant agitation and alarm. Judge if a Conſtitution thus conſtructed was at all likely to be uſeful or even practicable!

Sai. I ſhould think the State-veſſel muſt drive before the wind in ſuch a ſtorm, and that ſhe would founder without ever coming in ſight of port. It muſt be very fooliſh to think of building or mending Conſtitutions, or doing any ſuch nice work, in ſo hard a gale.

At

At ſea we never venture to lay a ſhip under repair but in calm weather and ſmooth water.

Far. Your ſuppoſition has been exactly realized; one of the fineſt countries in the world has been ruined, and is become at length ſuch a ſcene of horror that Human Nature ſhudders at the ſpectacle: and after four years ſo ſpent, with Revolution following Revolution, the whole buſineſs remains to be done, and a Conſtitution is ſtill to be formed, which will probably meet the ſame fate as that before it. But it has been the happineſs of *England* to obtain, by far different means, a Conſtitution which ſecures the Happineſs and Freedom of the People, and which is of courſe beloved by them; adapted in its nature to their temper and habits, and friendly in its exerciſe to order and tranquillity. I hope I have made it appear that this Conſtitution is authenticated by written vouchers, and thoſe of a much more reſpectable kind than any new-fangled code produced by Fancy and never confirmed by Practice. But the grand excellence of the *Britiſh* Conſtitution ſtill remains to be noticed, namely, that it exiſts not merely upon paper or parchment, but in actual practice: its benefits are hourly experienced; it is to be found in enjoyment; it is beſt known by its effects, as a tree by its fruits; and no more requires a pompous deſcription to convey an idea of its value than the

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genial warmth of the Sun, or the benevolent ſhowers of Heaven. The actual advantages poſſeſſed by *Engliſhmen* as their ſure and unalienable Birthright afford the moſt forcible and the moſt feeling deſcription of the Conſtitution, and exhibit to the eye and the heart *Magna Charta*,---the *Habeas Corpus* Act,---the Bill of Rights, and all the other Sources and Safeguards of our Liberties in their nobleſt form: and theſe advantages are peculiarly manifeſt in that Liberty and that Security which every Individual enjoys in this Country, which are the grand objects of Society, and the moſt valuable bleſſings it can beſtow.

Sai. People make ſuch a pother about Liberty that I thought it included every thing; but I don't remember hearing much about what you call Security.

Far. And yet without Security Liberty would be the worſt of Evils. If a People could live without Government and Laws, they would poſſeſs perfect Liberty without Reſtraint, and conſequently without Security: that is to ſay, there would be no Regulations or Public Force to prevent Individuals from doing whatever they pleaſe; of courſe the Strong would tyrannize over the Weak, the Good would be at the mercy of the Bad, and a conſtant ſcene of Rapine, Violence, and Bloodſhed would prevail. It is neceſſary therefore for Mankind to reſort for Protection to a State of Society, where

where Individuals are reſtrained by the compulſory obligation of Laws from doing what may be pernicious to Others or detrimental to the State. It is plain, therefore, that in Society a Portion of that Liberty which would belong to a State of Nature is given up as a neceſſary Price for Security. And Social Liberty means a Right to do whatever is not forbidden by the Laws; which Liberty flouriſhes in the higheſt Perfection in this Country, where there is no Power but that of the Laws to controul the Actions of any Perſon.

Man. But can you ſay that theſe Laws are equal for Rich and Poor?

Far. Certainly I can; and if you had truſted to your own obſervation, inſtead of liſtening to the falſe inſinuations of malicious Incendiaries, you would never have doubted it; for nothing can be more obvious, than that all perſons, whatever their birth, their ſtation, or their circumſtances may be, are of equal conſequence in the eye of the Law. The Rights of an *Engliſhman* are not the Rights merely of the Wealthy and the Great, but of ALL without diſtinction. The ſame Laws extend their protection alike to All; and whether a Nobleman ſtrikes a Labourer, or a Labourer a Nobleman, it is equally a violation of the Law, and the ſame Juſtice is open to Both. The grand prevailing Principle of our Conſtitution is to provide as much as poſſible for the

Peace,

Peace, Security, and Happineſs of every Individual in whatever ſtate or condition he may appear; and the eſſential Rights of Human Nature, which it is the object of Society to protect, are as ſacred in the perſon of the Loweſt as of the Higheſt. No man, however Rich or Great, can oppreſs the pooreſt Subject of theſe realms, no Station or Wealth can furniſh the leaſt protection from the penalties of the violated Laws; or prevent an injured Citizen from obtaining redreſs for his wrongs. Such are the important and invaluable privileges of Britons; while the grand bulwark of all, Trial by Jury, protects the enjoyment of our Rights from every danger, and forms the corner-ſtone of our Liberties.

Man. It ſurely, however, is no proof of the equality of the Laws that the poor are obliged to ſuſtain ſo many hardſhips and burthens, while the rich revel in luxury at their expence.

Far. Such cant is exactly the kind of argument upon which Mr. *Paine* chiefly relies for exciting diſcontent in the lower orders of Society; and I beg you to remark what a ſtrong proof it affords of the falſehood as well as of the malice and abſurdity of his aſſertions. So far from its being true that burthens are impoſed on the poor to ſupply the luxuries of the wealthy and great, as he would have you believe, the caſe is exactly the reverſe. The burthens of the State are impoſed upon thoſe who

are

are in circumſtances to ſupport them, and, as much as poſſible, according to their circumſtances: while the greateſt poſſible care is taken to prevent their falling upon others. Thus, for inſtance, no part of that large proportion of the taxes which is raiſed from Houſes is paid by thoſe who depend for ſubſiſtence on their bodily labour. Many other inſtances of a ſimilar nature might be mentioned, proving that the principle of taxation in this country is to lighten and relieve as much as poſſible the ſituation of the labouring part of the community, and to collect the neceſſary revenue from thoſe who are better able to ſupply it, and in proportion to that ability. But in what part of Mr. *Paine*'s writings is this important truth to be found. His aim being to deceive, it did not ſuit him to make any ſuch acknowledgment. It would have overſet his ſyſtem, and defeated his views. Thus you ſee to what deception they expoſe themſelves who give any credit to ſuch a man. Who that attended to Mr. *Paine* would imagine that among all that induſtrious claſs whom he repreſents as "paying their earnings in taxes to ſupport Court extravagance," ſcarce a ſingle individual ever ſees a tax-gatherer enter his habitation?

Man. Good God! you aſtoniſh me; and yet, upon conſideration, what you ſay is perfectly true. I ſee that I have been miſled in this matter.

Far. And

Far. And ſo will every one be who takes Mr. *Thomas Paine* for his oracle. But I beg you to conſider further, that while the condition of the poor is alleviated as much as poſſible, the luxuries of the rich are converted into ſources of revenue. Is there a luxury which is not made to contribute its due ſhare towards the public burthens? And are not the very ſame articles taxed when they are uſed as luxuries, and exempted from taxation when they appear only as neceſſaries—of which the duties upon ſervants may be mentioned as an inſtance. Nay, in ſome articles, which the peculiar and preſſing circumſtances of the moment had rendered it neceſſary to ſubject to a temporary additional tax, did not the Legiſlature in the laſt ſeſſion ſeize the earlieſt occaſion, afforded by the flouriſhing ſtate of the finances, to take off thoſe burdens, expreſly becauſe they affected thoſe claſſes which were leaſt able to ſupport them * : and are we not in expectation, that the continued and increaſing proſperity of the Nation, aided by the judicious and ſucceſsful plans of a wiſe and able Miniſter, will ſhortly produce

* One of the articles from which the above additional duty was taken off, furniſhes a ſtriking proof of the Farmer's obſervation, that the ſame article is a ſubject of taxation when uſed as a luxury, and of exemption when uſed as one of the neceſſaries of life; for the additional duty on wax and ſpermaceti candles was retained, while that on other candles was taken off.

more extenſive alleviations, and in time, perhaps, relieve us from all our burthens? One thing, indeed, might hinder ſuch deſirable events from taking place, and make all our brilliant proſpects vaniſh into darkneſs; I mean the ſucceſs of MR. PAINE's endeavours to introduce confuſion and anarchy. But I am perſuaded the people are much too ſenſible, as well of the advantages of their ſituation as of the malice of his views and the ruinous tendency of his projects, to pay any attention to what he ſays. And they will be little diſpoſed to rely either on the friendſhip or the wiſdom of a man, who has never had any reputation either for principle or prudence, who has neither character nor property at ſtake, and who evidently has no other object than to create diſturbance among a happy and contented people.

Sai. Pray who is this TOM PAINE, who makes ſuch a noiſe? I think I have not heard any one talked of ſo much ſince the time of *John the Painter.*

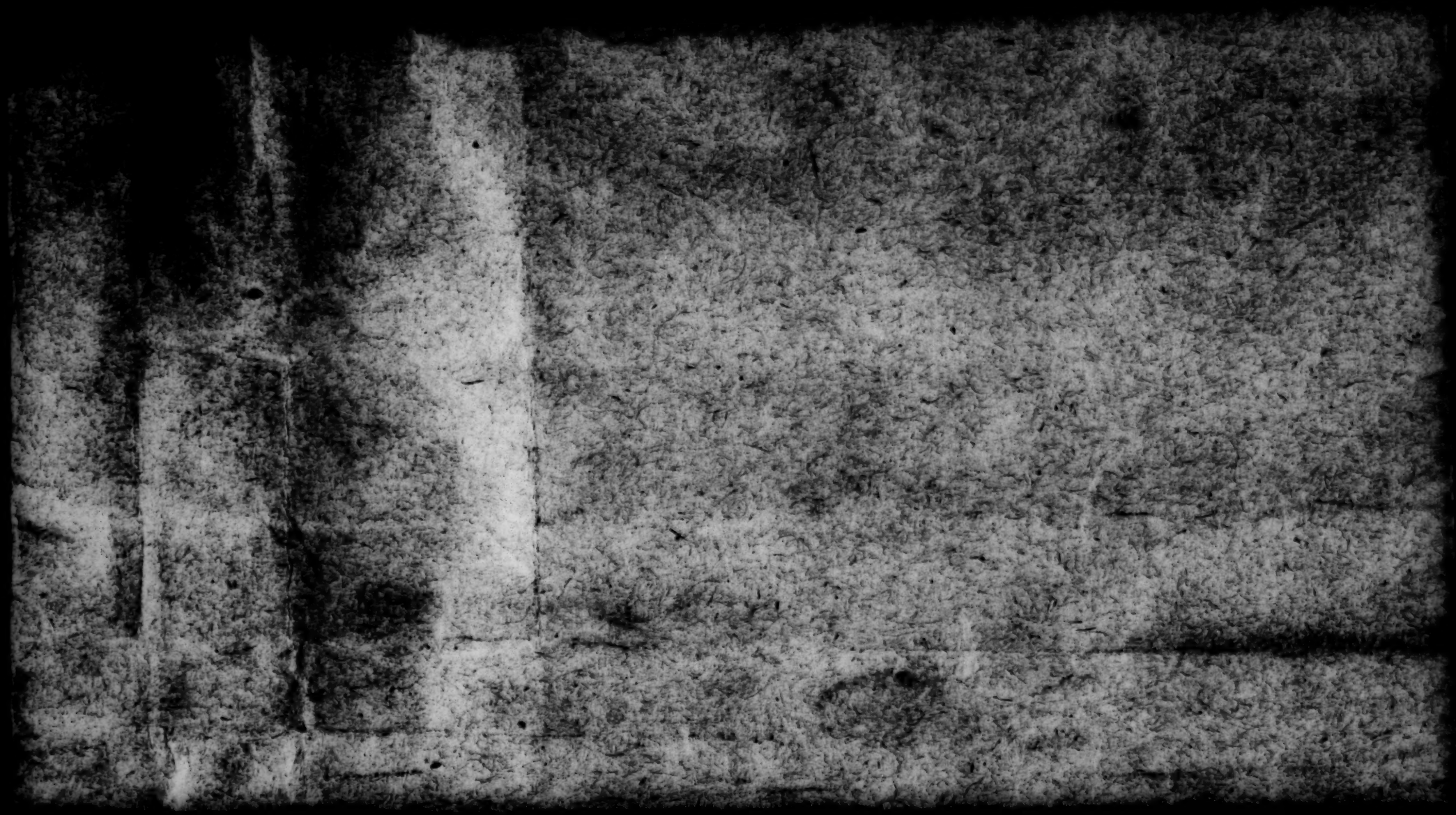
Far. His hiſtory is ſoon told. He was brought up a ſtaymaker under his father at *Thetford*, in the county of *Norfolk*. He ſomehow became an exciſeman in the year 1762; was diſcharged for malpractices in 1765; found means to get himſelf reſtored in 1766; but, being incorrigible, was diſcharged again. While in that office, beſides taking bribes from others to defraud the revenue, he dealt in exciſeable commodities himſelf, and ſo made his intereſt and

his

his duty draw different ways. He was twice married, though the death of his firſt wife has never yet been aſcertained; and upon his ſecond marriage, in defiance of the laws, he was falſely entered upon the regiſter as a batchelor. He gave his wives plenty of ill uſage, but allowed them none of the comforts of matrimony. He was a bad ſon, and broke his mother's heart. He never had a friend whom he did not reward with ingratitude. Finding no chance for ſucceſs here, he thought it beſt to decamp, and went to *America*; where, during the war, he ſhewed himſelf an enemy and traitor to his country, and did it all the harm he could. But, always conſiſtent with himſelf, he betrayed his new friends the *Americans*, and was therefore turned by them out of an office which his rancorous enmity to *Great Britain* had procured him. Returning to this country, he had the audacity to libel the King and Conſtitution; and, being proſecuted for his breach of the laws, has fled from juſtice. Laſtly, having thus been twice a Refugee *Engliſhman* and once a Refugee *American*, he is now become a *Jacobin Frenchman*, and is plotting with our ancient and implacable foes to bring deſtruction upon his native land.

Sai. Well, it is no bad thing that the ſhark has left our coaſt, though it would have been better to have given him his deſerts. But perhaps his new friends may do that buſineſs for him.

Far.

Far. Not at all unlikely. But I think we have ſpent more breath on him than he deſerves; and at preſent I muſt part with you, as I have a particular engagement. To-morrow I ſhall be glad to ſee you both again.

THE END OF THE FIRST DIALOGUE.